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ABSTRACT

This policy paper addresses how to strengthen school-based efforts for adolescent parents and their children so that they can be more effective in meeting the needs and improving the outcomes of these young families. Based on the experience and lessons of a 6-year effort, the Initiative to Strengthen School-Based Programs for Adolescent Parents and Their Young Children, this document addresses several specific challenges faced by school-based programs. Policy implications are discussed to accomplish these objectives: (1) making teen parents and their children visible; (2) helping the education system work for teen parents and their children; (3) providing critical services and supports to teen parents and their children; (4) linking schools with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) services and resources; and (5) providing services to all teen parents, both non-TANF and TANF. The experience of the initiative supports the need for a broader, community-based strategy to create a coordinated plan and build a comprehensive system for teen parents and their children. (SLD)

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CENTER FOR ASSESSMENT AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

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## IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR TEEN PARENTS AND THEIR YOUNG CHILDREN BY STRENGTHENING SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS

*Challenges, Solutions and Policy Implications*

S. A. Stephens
Wendy C. Wolf
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# SUMMARY OF POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This policy paper addresses how to strengthen school-based efforts for adolescent parents and their children so that they can be more effective in meeting the needs and improving outcomes of these young families. Based on the experience and lessons of a six-year effort — the Initiative to Strengthen School-Based Programs for Adolescent Parents and Their Young Children — funded by several national foundations[1] and administered by the Center for Assessment and Policy Development (CAPD), this document addresses several specific challenges faced by school-based programs. These challenges include:

- Making teen parents and their children visible;
- Helping the education system work for teen parents and their children;
- Providing critical services and supports to teen parents and their children;
- Linking schools with TANF services and resources; and
- Providing services to all teen parents, both non-TANF and TANF.

While this paper highlights innovative solutions to these challenges from the field, the major focus is on identifying policy changes — at the community, state and federal levels and those appropriate to private funders — that would allow programmatic solutions to be more broadly implemented. Pulling together these policy implications across each of the challenge areas reveals a rich array of possibilities that would strengthen school-based programs for adolescent parents and their children. These implications are summarized below.

## SUMMARY OF POLICY IMPLICATIONS TO STRENGTHEN SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS FOR ADOLESCENT PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

### Making teen parents and their children visible

- TANF, schools, health and social service agencies should regularly calculate rough estimates of teen parents and their children in planning service delivery sites and approaches, including outreach.
- Other funding programs should require estimates of the numbers of teen parents and their children and the priority that will be given to teen parents and the children of teen parents in applications and program plans.
- Requirements for identifying and ensuring adequate support for minor parents should be enacted into law and resources provided for carrying out assigned agency responsibilities.
- There should be centralized responsibility for teen parents within schools.
- The public, school staff and other provider agencies should be made more familiar with the rights of parenting adolescents to educational opportunities through public schools under Title IX and the availability of subsidized child care available through TANF and other sources to support school attendance.

[1] ***Phase I of this work was funded by The Foundation for Child Development, The Stuart Foundations, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and the California Wellness Foundation. Phase II was funded by the Foundation for Child Development, The Vira I. Heinz Endowment and The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.***

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## Summary of Policy Implications (continued)

### Helping the education system work for teen parents and their children

- The protections that Title IX affords pregnant and parenting students should be broadly promoted as a matter of district policy to students, parents, community members, school staff, administrators and school board members.
- School districts should seek to balance resources and priorities between enhanced services for adolescent parents within comprehensive high schools and stand-alone alternatives.
- Districts should commit core school district funds for the development and implementation of alternative instruction methodologies and other innovative educational approaches for at-risk students within mainstream schools.
- Replication packages and other information on alternative instructional methodologies and other educational interventions appropriate for at-risk students should be made available so that local school districts have access to information on new strategies for at-risk students.
- Districts should balance the goal of high school graduation for teen parents with realistic assessment of both student educational needs and status and community options for GED completion.
- TANF resources should be used to build the capacity of schools to address the needs of parenting students as well as support an array of educational options for teen parents in the broader community. Options could include but not be limited to community colleges and other community-based educational programs.
- Centralized responsibility for teen parents within school districts should extend to the young children of teen parents, and link with the district's efforts in the area of early childhood development and school readiness.

### Providing critical services and supports to teen parents and their children

- Community service providers — especially those charged with supporting early child development — need to consider schools as an important potential site for delivering services to, or at least reaching, parenting teens and their children.
- Public and private funding of community provider agencies, including early childhood service providers, should include requirements to implement strategies that link with school-based programs for teen parents and their children.
- Flexible funding streams should be developed (similar to those in California and Florida) that can pay for comprehensive coordinated case management services for all parenting students and their children, regardless of eligibility for public assistance or other means-tested benefits.
- Funding and technical assistance should be provided to support the development of a community system for case management, including standards of practice and accountability systems.
- Additional support for the dissemination of information and staff training on effective practices in working with teen parents and their children should be part of public and private funders' agenda in the areas of family strengthening, economic self-sufficiency and early child development.

### Linking schools with TANF services and resources

- Plans for the implementation of TANF should address the special needs and circumstances of parenting teen recipients.
- Local TANF agencies and school districts should develop joint procedures for identifying parenting teen TANF recipients and referring them to appropriate educational programs.

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## II. Introduction (continued)

- In addition, school-based case management that includes attention to the health and development of the teen's child and parenting education that helps young parents support their children's physical, emotional, social, language and cognitive development can also contribute to young children's school readiness and early school success.

Thus, school-based programs and school-linked services represent a particularly valuable, and feasible, opportunity to improve outcomes for both parenting adolescents and their young children.

The implementation of welfare reform and its requirements for adolescent parents who are receiving Temporary Assistance To Needy Families (TANF) benefits also offers opportunities to make a difference for these young families through school-based programs. Teen parents under the age of 18 on TANF are required, except in special circumstances, to be enrolled in educational programs. Local schools are thus a valuable resource for helping current TANF recipients meet these requirements and school enrollment, attendance and performance are now a concern of local and state welfare agencies. Further, services and supports to parenting teens while in school are likely to be an important component of effective welfare prevention efforts. Thus, schools and local welfare agencies have the opportunity to partner together and better meet the needs and improve the life chances of teen parents, and in the long run, of their children. To take advantage of this opportunity, however, communities need to strengthen all their institutions that potentially touch teen parents, including but not only schools, to meet a number of significant challenges.

There is tremendous potential for school-based programs to meet the needs and improve outcomes for both adolescent parents and their children, and there are many small scale and innovative school-based programs around the country. In addition, the relatively small number of parenting teens and the children of parenting teens in most communities offers opportunities. Their small numbers can make serving teen parents and their children and helping them get off to a good start in life seem, and be, more feasible. And, in fact, there are usually a number of agencies, programs and services in many communities that already provide services to adolescent parents and their children and could be parents with school-based programs.

However, in many communities school-based programs for adolescent parents and their children face many barriers and do not reach their full potential. They are unable to reach and serve anywhere near the numbers of teens and their children who could benefit. Nor do they offer an array of educational, health and social services and supports that research and best practice suggests are needed to have the greater success for teens and their children. Further, sustaining commitment to these programs during times of budget reductions and other crises faced by many school districts is often difficult, even at the same time that welfare reform has increased demands on schools to serve teen parents.

### THE INITIATIVE TO STRENGTHEN SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS FOR ADOLESCENT PARENTS AND THEIR YOUNG CHILDREN

Over the last six years, with the generous support of seven foundations,[5] the Center for Assessment and Policy Development has worked to clarify the issues and challenges facing school-based programs for adolescent parents and their children, and to identify and in some cases develop strategies to address these issues and challenges. The goals of this work have been to help school-based programs:

***[5] The first phase of our work was funded by the Foundation for Child Development, The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Stuart Foundations, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the California Wellness Foundation. The second phase of this work was generously funded by the Vira. I Heinz Foundations, The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Foundation for Child Development.***

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## II. Introduction (continued)

- Expand their efforts to reach *and* serve more teen parents and their children;
- Improve the quality, equity and effectiveness of the educational opportunities available to teen parents;
- Build connections with other community agencies and providers so that teen parents can receive the necessary support services to stay in and successfully complete school; and
- Ensure that the young children of teen parents have access to preventive health services and developmentally appropriate child care.

Phase I of the Initiative was national in scope, identifying major barriers and challenges to implementing school-based programs for teen parents and their children and documenting innovative local approaches to meeting these challenges. The major product of this phase was a report that has been broadly disseminated and widely used in the field.[6]

Phase II of the work has been carried out in partnership with the school-based programs for adolescent parents in three communities: Minneapolis, Minnesota; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Portland, Oregon.[7] Beginning in January 1996, these programs have been provided with grant funds, technical assistance, opportunities for cross-site exchange, and intermediary support. These supports have allowed these programs to:

- Expand their outreach efforts and enroll additional teen parents in school-based programs;
- Provide training for school-based advocates and child care staff, as well as staff in other agencies and programs, to improve service quality;
- Strengthen individual assessment and case management strategies;
- Build stronger referral networks with community-based agencies linking teen parents and their children with a range of services;
- Put in place technical capacity to collect and analyze data on teen parent and child characteristics, school enrollment and attendance, use of other services, and educational and development outcomes;
- Increase community awareness of the numbers of teen parents and their children and the need to provide them with services and supports; and
- Leverage additional public and private resources to support school-based teen parent programs.

From our earlier national review and the past three years' work with these three communities, CAPD has gleaned insight into challenges confronting and solutions available to communities that want to make use of school-based or linked services and supports to improve outcomes for adolescent parents and their children. Many of the challenges are easily identified and many community- or program-specific strategies to address these challenges exist that could be adopted more broadly. However, development of a comprehensive, sustainable effort at a scale sufficient to ensure that all teen parents and their children benefit is hampered by a lack of a coherent set of local, state and federal policies.

### ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THIS DOCUMENT

In this document, we organize our lessons learned about challenges, solutions from the field, and policy implications around the following essential tasks of effective school-based programs for adolescent parents and their children:

- How to bring attention to the numbers and needs of teen parents and their children so that community resources and services can be appropriately focused;

**[6] *See* School-Based Programs for Adolescent Parents and Their Young Children: Overcoming Barriers and Challenges to Implementing Comprehensive School-Based Services. *CAPD, Bala Cynwyd, PA, 1994.***

***[7] In Minneapolis, Barbara Kyle, Sara Mullett and the TPP coordinators; in Pittsburgh, Kathy Short, Jan Ripper and Sally Mole; and in Portland, Oregon, Mary Karter, Jo Bronson, Jerene Merritt and the TPS staff.***

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## II. Introduction (continued)

- How to help schools provide more effective educational services to parenting students;
- How to ensure that these young families — both teen parents and their children — have access to a range of other services and supports;
- How to link school-based programs with welfare reform policies affecting teen parents; and
- How to harness community resources so that all teen parents in school-based programs — whether or not they are eligible for TANF — can be served.

At the end of this document, we reiterate our belief that, as a nation, we will not be able to make best use of the energy and resources that are now directed toward benefitting teen parents and their children until we are willing and able to create a comprehensive strategy and coordinated set of policies for these young families.

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## III. MAKING TEEN PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN VISIBLE

While adolescent parents and their children are a highly vulnerable population, they are not highly visible within most public systems. In most communities, the total number of parenting teens or of the young children of teen parents is not known, and their special needs and special opportunities are not the subject of community or agency plans or strategies. Of course, at the same time, this "invisibility" in the allocation of public resources and services does not extend to the political arena, where births to unmarried teens are often cited as one example of the decay of family values in our society and thus of the need for changes in policies in a number of areas to reduce adolescent sexual activity.

However, the fact that parenting adolescents and their children are not identified as the target for intervention in many service systems is a significant issue to be tackled in strengthening school-based, as well as community-based, intervention efforts. This section elaborates on some of the challenges associated with the invisibility of parenting teens and highlights some programmatic solutions we have seen in our work. It ends with several policy recommendations that could help programs and communities address these challenges.

### THE CHALLENGES OF "INVISIBILITY" FOR ADOLESCENT PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Teen parents and their children are served by many different systems. These young parents often are or have been in public school. They may be a member of a household receiving public assistance benefits. They may use public health or nutrition services prenatally or for their children. They or their children may be enrolled with a medical assistance insurer or provider. They may receive counseling or social work services or case management because of involvement with the child welfare system. Thus, teen parents are often found within the larger client or target population of many agencies, but generally not identified or identifiable as a separate group.[8]

These challenges are just as evident for teen parents in schools. Given their relatively small numbers and the fact that student record systems generally do not identify (for good reasons) parenting students, teen parents can get lost within the general student population. This tendency may be reinforced by site-based management and decentralized budgeting. Individual schools may have identified only a few such students within their population and no school may have responsibility for identifying and tracking students who may drop out or move around frequently due to issues related to pregnancy or parenting. Teen parents have no natural advocate within the school-level administration, and this is even more true of the young children of parenting students since the focus of the building staff is on students at the junior and high school level, not on school readiness for upcoming cohorts of primary grade students.

This invisibility in systems that provide teen parents and their children with services means that their special circumstances and needs — and the special opportunities and challenges in serving them — are not recognized. These factors are likely to limit the effectiveness of interventions.

- Teen parents may be offered an intervention designed for adult clients that does not address their unique developmental issues.

***[8] For example, schools are often reluctant to indicate on their records a student's status as a parent, as it represents a stigmatizing characteristic. In public assistance and child welfare systems, teen parents and their children may be embedded within larger households and not identified separately when reporting case statistics.***

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**III. Making Teen Parents and Their Children Visible\e (continued)**

- The additional challenges of attending and doing well in school while taking on the responsibilities of parenting may not be considered by the educational system.
- The dynamics of three-generation households may not be taken into account in providing parenting education or other supports.
- Opportunities to address the special health and developmental risks that face the young children of adolescents may not be used.

The invisibility of teen parents and their children within schools and the health and social service delivery system obviously does not protect them from the potential negative effects — immediate and longer term — of early childbearing. In fact, it increases their risk for poor outcomes because often they are not connected with available services and supports and the services and supports they are provided may not be designed to meet their special needs and circumstances.

As a first step in putting in place effective strategies for these young families, decision makers at all levels need to be aware of the true numbers, circumstances and needs of parenting adolescents within their community and within individual systems. In our work we have seen several ways in which school-based programs, working with other providers and advocates, have made their communities more aware of the numbers and needs of teen parents and their children.

## SOLUTIONS FROM THE FIELD

Communities have used a number of strategies to reduce the invisibility of teen parents and their children within schools and service agencies and within the community. These strategies have resulted in increased resources being directed to meeting the needs of both the teens and their children and increased access to services and supports. These strategies include:

- Using more accurate estimates of the number of teen parents to advocate for program expansion and increased investment in services;
- Developing, and in some cases mandating, procedures to identify teen parents and link them with services and supports; and
- Promoting the protections Title IX affords pregnant and parenting students.

### Using estimates of the number of teen parents in advocacy

Very often the number of parenting teens in a community is assumed to be the number of teen births in a given year. In fact, of course, it is several times that number when young mothers who gave birth in earlier years and are still teenagers are included.

- Procedures for more accurately estimating the number of female teen parents are described in CAPD'S website: http://www.capd.org/home/services/teenparents/teenparents.htm. They involve summing the number of births to women of a particular target age (be that 17, 18 or 19) and younger in a given reference year and adding this number to the numbers of births in previous years to women who are still younger than that age. For example, assume that only births to 17-year-olds or younger teens are of interest. In the year prior to the reference year the sum would include births to teens who were 16 or younger in that year. For the year two years prior to the reference year the sum would include births to teens who were 15 or younger in that year, and so on.

While estimates from this approach do not completely take into account migration, repeat births to teens, teenage fathers, and other factors, they are defensible and understandable benchmarks against which to assess current program enrollment and outreach efforts.

Statistical estimates of the number of teen parents in the community have been effectively used to stimulate public debate about strategies to address their needs and those of their children and to generate increased investment in those strategies.

- In Minnesota an important part of a successful lobbying effort was demonstrating that there were

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many thousands of teen parents throughout the state, based on the estimates from birth records as described above. The coalition supporting the Teen Parent Initiative in Minneapolis joined with the Minnesota chapter of the National Organization for Adolescent Pregnancy, Parenting and Prevention (MOAPPP) in 1998 to successfully lobby the state legislature for an initial grant program to support the development and strengthening of school-based teen parent programs. The same coalition, joined again by MOAPPP and other teen parent programs around the state, is again engaged with the legislature during its 1999 session to argue for increased funding and expansion of this grant program.

- In another aspect of its work, the Minneapolis Teen Parent Initiative brought together a group of program managers and information system staff from the public schools, the city health department and the county social services agency to design and implement a cross-agency data matching project. This project was intended to provide the community as a whole with first-ever information on the numbers of teen parents involved in various service systems and build an initial understanding of their careers in those systems — what services they used, when they used them relative to conception and delivery, and with what results. This work, still underway, even in its design phase has contributed to a greater recognition among publicly funded programs of their shared interest in and responsibility for teen parents.

**Using data to determine service gaps and identify unserved teen parents**

Recognizing the gap between the number of parenting teens in the community and those known to be enrolled in public school programs can spur additional identification and outreach.

- Minnesota mandates that all teenagers who give birth be contacted to offer services and ensure that there is a plan in place to ensure their child's health and development and their own progress toward self-sufficiency. Implemented in different ways in different jurisdictions within the state, in Minneapolis it is the responsibility of the county social services agency, which has created an Adolescent Parent Unit. Information on the numbers of teen parents living in the county compared to the number served through this unit has spurred interest in better communication and coordination between county social services and Minneapolis' school-based teen parent programs.

Analysis of program data on other services received by parenting teen clients can also strengthen outreach and referral procedures across programs.

- Data from the Pittsburgh Teen Parent Program indicated that WIC was a good potential source of referrals to the school-based programs because pregnant teens had already enrolled in WIC prior to entering school-based programs. There is now an established referral relationship between the two programs.

- In Pittsburgh, estimates of the gap between the number of parenting teens in the community and those served in school-based programs spurred additional outreach and referral efforts. The same was true in Minneapolis, where various school staff (social workers, nurses, school-based health clinic staff, counselors) were asked to identify currently enrolled pregnant and parenting students so that they can be offered the range of supports available within the district.

Geomapping of the residences of teen parents, school sites offering teen parent programs, and the location of child care providers, health clinics and other service providers can be helpful in identifying mismatches between the needs of teen parents and the accessibility and appropriateness of available services and supports.

- Geomapping carried out by the California Department of Health for the whole state has provided county by county geographic distributions of teen births using birth record data.

**Promoting the protections of Title IX**

Title IX offers legal protections for the rights of pregnant and parenting students to equal access to educational opportunities within public schools. Concerns about compliance with Title IX can heighten the visi-

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bility of this group of students and make it harder to see each individual teen parent as a special case.

- The Pittsburgh Teen Parent Program has worked extensively within the school district to educate administrators, teachers and pupil support personnel about the requirements and protections related to parenting students under Title IX. This work has made the needs and rights of teen parents more widely known within the district.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

We have seen the power that even rough estimates of the numbers of teen parents in a community can have in increasing program investments and changing program practices. Therefore, one key policy recommendation is that TANF, schools, health and social services regularly calculate rough estimates of teen parents and their children in planning service delivery sites and approaches, including outreach. In particular, we recommend that state and local plans for the administration of TANF funds routinely identify the total number of teen parents and their children, both those currently eligible for economic assistance and those potentially eligible. These numbers should include teen parents who are nested within other households.

In addition, community needs assessments required by funding programs (such as CCDBG) should include estimates of the numbers of teen parents and their children. Further, local requests for funds related to maternal and child health, school achievement, youth development, early childhood and school readiness programs should indicate what priority will be given to teen parents and the children of teen parents.

Even more powerful would be statutory requirements for identifying and ensuring adequate support for minor parents. This may be a public health measure such as under Minnesota law, or a child welfare matter such as in states that require mandated reporting of a pregnancy or birth to a minor under age 15, assuming a substantial incidence of statutory rape and/or sexual abuse among this population.

Along with these legal mandates should come resources for carrying out assigned agency responsibilities.

- These may include training designated staff responsible for teen parents and setting up appropriate accountability and incentive systems. The technical capacity and resources to identify parenting teens and the children of teens may not be well developed. Support may be required for information infrastructure enhancements and for technical assistance so that communities and their public agencies can compile and analyze pertinent information. This may include assistance in responding to concerns about data privacy and technical issues related to protection of data confidentiality across systems.

In particular, there is a need for centralized responsibility for teen parents within schools, as many districts move to school-based planning and management. One task for central administration would be to carry out wider education within schools (and among other agencies that serve teen parents) on the protections of Title IX as well as monitoring compliance with this law in the same way that the rights of students with disabilities have been overseen. This may require additional emphasis from the federal department of education on state accountability for Title IX compliance for pregnant and parenting students.

In addition, the broader public and other provider agencies should be made more familiar with the rights of parenting adolescents to educational opportunities through public schools under Title IX and the availability of subsidized child care available through TANF to support school attendance. This is beyond the responsibility of any community institution or agency and is likely to require the efforts of local coalitions and state-wide advocacy, as we argue in the conclusion to this document.

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# IV. HELPING THE SYSTEM WORK FOR TEEN PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Even when enrolled and attending school, many teen parents often struggle to make progress and are unable to complete high school within the mainstream school environment. Others who are in special "stand-alone" programs for pregnant or parenting students do not have access to specialized or advanced courses. Making sure that all parenting students have the best opportunity to succeed in school and have access to the full range of educational options available in the district are challenges that school-based teen parent programs face.

## THE CHALLENGES OF PROVIDING QUALITY, APPROPRIATE EDUCATION TO PARENTING STUDENTS

There are several reasons why making education programs work well for teen parents can be difficult. As noted in the previous section, except when in separate or stand-alone schools or programs, teen parents are invisible within the school system.

- Only a fraction of teen parents are in fact served in these programs and other teen parents are not identified in school records.[9]
- Few school districts estimate the number of teen parents who might be enrolled or who might be eligible for enrollment in the community (those of school-age who have not yet completed a high school diploma or equivalent).
- Site-based management has the effect of making pregnant and parenting students even less visible within the broader student population.

Also, many pregnant and parenting teens — whether they remain in school or return to school — have significant educational deficits and some may have undetected learning disabilities. There has been extensive research[10] pointing out the link between school failure — poor attendance, poor grades, school dropout — and teenage pregnancy and childbearing. Although teen parents are not the only group of students with these educational needs, the fact that they also have other needs (for child care, parenting education, case management, and the like) means that they present substantial challenges to the school system.

One solution is to place teen parents in stand-alone alternative or separate schools or programs. Very often these programs are designed to provide the special support services that teen parents need, but do not offer educational options comparable to those offered in comprehensive high schools. This limits the ability of some teen parents in these programs to develop their interests and competencies. At the same time, few districts have implemented strategies to provide support services for teen parents within comprehensive high schools.

Title IX protects teen parents from discrimination in the educational system based on gender, pregnancy, marital or parenting status. For example, under Title IX school districts cannot automatically assign pregnant or parenting students to separate schools or programs unless they have the same educational offerings and experiences available to other students. However, the rights of teen parents to have access to equal educational opportunities are not well known by students, school staff or parents. Parenting students' individual educational needs and goals may not be met.

[9] *Obviously, there are good reasons for this, to protect student confidentiality.*

[10] *See J. Dryfoos,* Youth At Risk: One in Four in Jeopardy, *Report submitted to the Carnegie Foundation, New York, NY, 1987, and* Adolescents-at-Risk: Prevalence and Prevention, *New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990.*

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## SOLUTIONS FROM THE FIELD

A number of strategies adopted by school districts to meet the educational needs of pregnant and parenting students address the challenges noted above.

One strategy addresses the issue of the invisibility of parenting students within the larger student population.

- When districts estimate the number of girls eligible to be served through school-based efforts [11] — such as was done in Minneapolis, Pittsburgh and Portland, OR for this Initiative, they usually find that, while they are serving a substantial number of parenting students, the number served is small in comparison to the number of young parents who are still eligible for school enrollment. Once the target number of teen parents is shown to be considerably larger than those currently identified, attention can be drawn to this population and its needs within the broader student population.

Knowing the actual number of parenting students can stimulate the placement of support services for teen parents into comprehensive high schools, rather than only looking at stand-alone alternatives.

- Providing these services within a mainstream school setting, rather than only in stand-alone programs, can be less costly, reach more students, and provide access to a greater array of educational options than relying on separate or alternative school settings for teen parents. Through the Initiative, all three sites (Minneapolis, Pittsburgh and Portland) successfully expanded the services available at comprehensive high schools — including case management, on-site child care or links to nested family day care, and health services.

Some districts recognize that the educational deficiencies of teen parents may be comparable to the educational needs of other at-risk students.

- For example, the Pittsburgh public school system is considering the development of alternatives that provide varied instructional methodologies for a broad group of at- risk students. Linking the educational needs of many parenting students with others should increase the economies of scale in developing and providing alternative approaches, whether these be computerized instruction, individual education plans, competency-based approaches, or others. This strategy would help address the educational needs of many teen parents, while increasing their access to a broader array of educational services.

Education and training on Title IX provisions can affect the educational opportunities available to teen parents.

- Simply handing out a one page pamphlet from the National Women's Law Center to students, parents, teachers, community advocates and front-line staff who work with teen parents can raise the issue of equal access to education. This in itself can begin an examination of implications for school policy and practice. Further, under site-based management, many schools are responsible for developing and promoting policies at the school-level, and with central administration support, can be asked to develop polices for pregnant and parenting teens that are consonant with Title IX.
- Even with all of these activities, however, experience suggests that it is important to have some centralized responsibility within the district for implementing Title IX protections and troubleshooting issues as they arise.

***[11] As noted in a previous chapter, this target number is considerably greater than the annual number of births to women 18 and under. In fact, it is usually 2 to 3 times that number because many women who gave birth in their teens have still not reached their 19th birthday and some have multiple births while teenagers. One method for estimating the total number of teen parents in a community is described in CAPD's paper,* Assessing the Number of Eligible Teen Parents for School Based-Programs, *which can be found on our web site at www.capd.org/home/ services/teenparents/teenparents.htm).***

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## IV. Helping the System Work for Teen Parents and Their Children (continued)

There are a number of specific school practices that can assist parenting students, and others at risk of school failure and dropout, succeed in and complete high school.[12]

- For example, attendance policies can be created that do not penalize teens who have given birth by treating their absences like any other absences due to medical conditions and allowing credits for home study.
- Granting partial credits for course work interrupted by delivery, scheduling to allow students to transport their children to child care at a reasonable hour and still reach class on time or to provide afternoon time for doctors' appointments and other parenting responsibilities, and the creative use of summers are also examples of approaches that encourage parenting teens to continue in and complete school.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of policy changes that would create an environment in which educational systems are more likely to implement practices that will promote the success of parenting students.

The protections that **Title IX affords** pregnant and parenting students needs to be more broadly **promoted as a matter of district policy.** Students, parents, community members, school staff, administrators and school board members all need to be aware of and committed to the implementation of Title IX. Districts and individual schools could undoubtedly benefit from technical assistance in this area, and federal monitoring and enforcement of Title IX provisions should be enhanced.

**School districts should ensure that there is centralized responsibility** for the development and implementation of policies to support the educational success of teen parents. This responsibility should include work in the areas of planning and evaluation, collaboration with community agencies involved with teen parents, work with students to ensure appropriate educational assessment and placement, training and monitoring around Title IX, and the like. In addition, this responsibility should extend to the young children of teen parents, and link with the district's efforts in the area of early childhood development and school readiness.

Districts should seek to **balance resources and priorities between enhanced services for adolescent parents within comprehensive high schools and stand-alone alternatives.** No one option for parenting students will meet all students' educational needs and goals, and failing to offer a range of options is very likely to place the district in violation of Title IX. Further, the only way that it would be economically and administratively feasible for a district to serve the actual number of teen parents who are or could be in school is by expanding services beyond stand-alone alternatives.

Districts should commit core school district funds for the development and implementation of **alternative instruction methodologies and other innovative educational approaches** for at-risk students within mainstream schools. From an educational perspective, the needs of many teen parents and those of other at-risk students are similar and strategies to meet the educational needs of teen parents can be effective with these other students as well. It is important to note that promoting the educational success of at-risk students is likely to be an effective pregnancy prevention strategy, and pregnancy prevention and dropout prevention resources should be eligible to fund development and implementation of alternative educational approaches that will benefit a broad group of students, including teen parents.

**Replication packages and other information on alternative instructional methodologies** and other educational interventions appropriate for at-risk students should be made available so that local school districts have access to information on new

[12] *For more details and examples of programs implementing these practices, see* **School-Based Programs for Adolescent Parents and Their Young Children: Overcoming Barriers and Challenges to Implementing Comprehensive School-Based Services.** ***CAPD, Bala Cynwyd, PA, 1994.***

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## IV. Helping the System Work for Teen Parents and Their Children (continued)

strategies for at-risk students. Special attention should be given to tailoring these models to students with attendance issues and other personal problems, including family responsibilities outside of school. Obviously, such a task is beyond the staff resources or financial capacity of individual districts. Therefore, this should be the responsibility of federal and state education departments. Within those departments, there should be designated units and positions with a focus on parenting students and a link to those units and positions supporting school readiness and early childhood education efforts.

At the same time, districts should balance the push for high school graduation for teen parents with **realistic assessment of both student educational needs and status and community options for GED completion.** Schools should not abdicate their responsibility for ensuring that all young people in their community are given the opportunity for acquiring educational skills and certification. Schools, therefore, should work closely with school- and community-based GED programs to find appropriate placements for those teen parents who are far behind in school, particularly those students who may run up against welfare time limits for education if they attempt a high school diploma.

In particular, **TANF resources should be used to support an array of educational options for teen parents** in the broader community. Options could include but not be limited to community colleges and other community-based educational programs.

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# V. PROVIDING CRITICAL SERVICES AND SUPPORTS TO TEEN PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Education is a key to the long-term well-being of adolescent parents and their children, and making educational systems work for teen parents is a critical priority. At the same time, it is clear that many of these young parents will not be able to stay in and succeed in school without additional services, including health care, child care, parenting education, and case management. Further, assuring the health, development, school readiness and ultimately school success of the children of teen parents means that these young families need support services.

Our review of research evidence and best practices has identified a set of critical services that should be available through a comprehensive school-based approach in order to ensure the best outcomes for teen parents and their children. Not all teen parents need all these services or need them continuously, nor is it necessary that all individual programs provide all of them on site. However, our analysis suggests that a community that wants its school-based efforts to have the maximum benefit for *all* teen parents *and* their children will put in place a system of services and supports, accessible based on need, that includes:

- A core set of services offered to all pregnant and parenting adolescents for themselves and their children:
  - developmentally appropriate child care;
  - prenatal care and family planning services;
  - preventive health care for infants and young children; and
  - case management that includes assessment, care planning and coordination of services in the areas of health, nutrition, education, parenting, psychosocial development, life skills and economic self-sufficiency.
- A set of additional services and supports that should be available in sufficient supply and accessible to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting teens and their children:
  - transportation;
  - counseling, including substance abuse counseling and treatment;
  - housing assistance; and
  - economic assistance.

In this section we outline the challenges inherent in making these services available through school-based programs and identify some approaches used by local communities to overcome these challenges. We end with several suggested policy changes that would help expand and extend these efforts.

## THE CHALLENGES OF PROVIDING CRITICAL SERVICES TO ADOLESCENT PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

There are three major sets of challenges that communities face when attempting to create a system of services and supports linked with school-based programs for teen parents and their children:

- Barriers internal to schools related to bringing in or linking with community-based services;
- Limitations in the capacity of available community-based service providers to serve teen parents in age-appropriate ways and to link with schools; and
- The reluctance of some teens to make use of support services, whether school- or community-based.

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## V. Providing Critical Services and Supports to Teen Parents and Their Children (continued)

### Barriers within schools to linking with community-based services

Schools can be inhospitable environments for other services. They are one of the largest bureaucracies in a community, operating under very different regulations, labor agreements, and other restrictions from other agencies. Schools see their primary mission as education and are increasingly held publically accountable for the school success of the general student population, while other organizations in the health and social service arena have different agendas and different ways of measuring and being held accountable for success for their clients. Even when schools provide support services on-site (such as counseling by school staff or health clinics operated by local hospitals or other providers), they are not necessarily tailored to the needs or special circumstances of parenting students or available to their children. And, schools are often reluctant to accept responsibility for providing services to the young children of teen parents, even when they recognize the long-term impact of efforts to increase school readiness.

### Capacity limitations of community-based providers

Many of the support services and supports needed by teen parents — economic assistance, health care, housing, child development programming, case management and other critical services — are available in the community, but are designed for and offered to parents and families, regardless of the age of the parent. While this may make these services broadly available in the community, depending on other eligibility criteria such as income, it is also likely to mean that they are not specially suited to the unique needs of teen parents and their children. Even the processes required for accessing and using these services may assume a level of maturity and independence that many teen parents do not yet have. Identifying and meeting the needs of adolescents and their children may require special skills or capacities for which providers may not be prepared.

Further, there is considerable fragmentation within the health and social service provider community making it difficult for there to be a coherent system-wide plan for linking services with schools. Thus, school-based programs must negotiate these arrangements on an ad hoc basis with many different organizations, while at the same time there is often resistence to changing the catchment areas, sites and times at which services are offered to fit more closely with school schedules or to offer services at schools. Some agencies do not see advantages of linking with schools to identify teen parents who may need their services, when they are already unable to meet additional demand (as in the case of subsidized housing) or may be experiencing pressure to reduce the number of clients (as for public assistance benefits).

### Reluctance of teens to use services

Adolescents themselves very often resist seeking out and using available support services. Even when such services are offered to them, it often takes special efforts to deal with the concerns of teen parents for their own independence and authority over decisions affecting themselves and their children, while providing them with appropriate information and guidance in making appropriate decisions.

For example, many teen parents are reluctant, at least initially, to use formal child care programs, preferring relative care. It is often hard to ensure the quality and stability of relative care arrangements or to use such care settings to link teens and their children with other support services. While these issues face other parents who must choose child care, making sure this decision is an informed one for parenting teens may require special effort. Helping teens consider all facets of their decision about child care in light of their own needs and the needs of their child is often a delicate process, one that must take into account teen parent fears for the well-being of their child in the hands of "strangers" and sometimes the pressure teens may feel from their families to keep their children at home.[13]

***[13] In addition to believing in the importance of caring for children at home, some families may look to child care stipends provided for relative care as a way to supplement income and teen parents may feel an obligation to help their families in this way.***

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## SOLUTIONS FROM THE FIELD

We have seen a number of ways in which individual communities have brought support services to school-based teen parent programs.[14] They include:

- Linking community providers with schools in the following ways:
  - outstationing staff from health and social service agencies at schools (for example, in St. Paul, Minnesota, where JOBS workers from the county are housed in schools to provide case management services to participating students);
  - providing space at school sites for operation of satellite offices like health clinics (for example, in Columbus, Ohio, where a local hospital uses a mobile medical van to provide prenatal care to students at a high school site); and
  - bringing services to school sites on a rotating basis (for example, in Pinellas County, Florida, where the county health department provides a traveling well-baby clinic for the children of students in the schools' teen parent programs).
- Creating referral arrangements so that school or school-based staff (nurses, social workers, counselors) can link students to off-site services — this has been particularly effective in making family planning services available to students where local policy does not permit reproductive health issues to be addressed by school staff or in school facilities.
- Providing specialized training and support to both staff and family involved with teen parents and their children — for example, Minneapolis has a network of family day care providers who receive on-going training and are compensated at a higher rate for their work with teen parents and their children. In addition, a training program has been developed for the staff in school-based child care centers.
- Setting up alternative school sites at supervised living arrangements for teen parents where other services are also provided.[15] The Juvenile Horizons program in St. Paul, Minnesota, which offers a therapeutic living environment for teen parents and their children, has a public school-operated educational program on site.
- Putting in place cross-agency comprehensive case management for teen parents and their children. Two of the Initiative sites — Minneapolis and Portland — focused considerable effort on developing the procedures, tools and school-community provider relationships necessary to implement comprehensive case management. In Minneapolis the focus was on ensuring a coordinated way to identify and respond quickly to school attendance issues among parenting students. In Portland system development focused on providing standardized assessment and case management services to both TANF and non-TANF teen parents.

However, it appears that the strategy with the greatest potential for broad impact and sustainability is to put in place a network among community-based providers and schools with the will, authority and resources to develop, sustain and strengthen a system of supports and services for teen parents and their children.

- In states where the state has funded case management for teen parents (California and Rhode Island), it has been easier for communities to build the network and develop such a system. In both states, state case management funds for teen parents are accompanied by a responsibility to identify a community convener or coordinator for the provider system, which generally includes schools, public assistance, social services, health and housing. While communities have discretion about which agency will take on this responsibility and administer the state funds, there are requirements that bring the schools and other public entities to the

[14] ***Some communities are cited below, but more details on solutions and more examples are described in our earlier report,* School-Based Programs for Adolescent Parents and Their Young Children: Overcoming Barriers and Challenges to Implementing Comprehensive School-Based Services. *CAPD, Bala Cynwyd, PA, 1994.***

[15] ***See S. T. Batten and S. J. Koenig,* Local Implementation of the TANF Minor Teen Parent Living Arrangement Rule, *Bala Cynwyd, PA: CAPD, January 29, 1999, for more general information.***

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table. These state efforts have gone a long way toward helping communities overcome institutional and organizational barriers to collaboration. They have provided the funding necessary to operate provider networks and to develop local systems of services and supports linked to schools.

- Minneapolis and Portland do not have a state-level mandate or resources. However, their locally-driven work on case management has marked the beginnings of such a system. Both sites were able to use foundation grants to obtain consultant support for facilitation of cross-agency work sessions and technical assistance in the development of forms and procedures and in staff training.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted above, there are many hurdles to overcome in linking community-based services with school-based programs for teen parents. **Community service providers — especially those charged with supporting early child development — need to consider schools as an important potential site** for delivering services to, or at least reaching, parenting teens and their children. At the same time, the educational system needs to see community providers and agencies as a way to reach teen parents who may not be engaged in or only marginally connected with schools. While there is considerable goodwill and shared interest in helping these vulnerable young families, overcoming the natural barriers to working more closely together would be greatly facilitated by funding incentives.

Public and private funding of community provider agencies, including early childhood service providers, should include **requirements to implement strategies that link with school-based programs** for teen parents and their children. (As noted in the next section, there are special opportunities for use of TANF resources to strengthen links with school-based programs for parenting teens.) School districts should also be held accountable, and provided financial incentives, by their boards for developing relationships with community agencies that bring support services into schools for at-risk students, including parenting students. They should also be expected to enhance the school readiness of the children of teen parents by helping establish links with health and child development services, whether through on-site child care or other child care settings, for the children of all parenting students.

One approach to this would be to **develop flexible funding streams that pay for comprehensive coordinated case management services** for all teen parents and their children, regardless of eligibility for public assistance or other means-tested benefits. Research — such as the evaluation of Ohio's LEAP program — has shown the effectiveness of providing case management to parenting teens at school sites. These services need not be provided by school staff, but should ensure that parenting teens are supported to complete their education and acquire the necessary academic and life skills necessary to become self-sufficient. Case management services should also focus on the health and development of the children of teen parents. Thus, the outcomes that case management services should be designed to achieve include not only the immediate educational engagement and success of teen parents, but also their long-term chances for self-sufficiency and their children's chances for school readiness and early school success.

Making case management successful in both the long and short run and for both teen parents and their children will require the **development of standards of practice and accountability systems** that support these goals. Further, case management will only work to the extent that there is a system of services and supports appropriate to meet identified needs and implement individualized service plans. Therefore, funding and technical assistance are needed to support the **development of a community system,** including creating a forum for establishing connections and building relationships among providers including the schools, exploring and overcoming barriers to information sharing and exchange, and developing joint accountability that acknowledges each provider organization's unique contribution while still holding the entire system responsible for parenting teen and child outcomes.

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## V. Providing Critical Services and Supports to Teen Parents and Their Children (continued)

Finally, additional support for the **documentation and dissemination of information on effective practices** in working with teen parents and their children should be part of a public and private funders' agenda in the areas of family strengthening, economic self-sufficiency and early child development. This information then needs to be translated into **training for front-line staff** in the various service agencies and providers who have the opportunity to work with teen parents or the children of teens.

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# VI. LINKING SCHOOLS WITH TANF SERVICES AND RESOURCES

The welfare reform legislation that created the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families to replace the open-ended entitlement system of AFDC recognizes the unique circumstances of teen parents in two important ways. First, it stipulates that federal TANF benefits may be provided only to teen parents living under adult supervision, usually with their parents or other adult relative, except in individual circumstances where that requirement has been waived by the state.[16] Second, it requires that teen parents receiving TANF benefits who are younger than 18 and who have not completed their high school education or equivalent be enrolled in and attend an educational program. It is the latter requirement that offers an opportunity, and presents special challenges, for communities.

The requirement that teen parents receiving TANF participate in educational programs brings schools to the forefront in efforts to reduce long-term welfare dependency. This requirement increases potential demand for school-based programs and services for teen parents, and evidence from earlier welfare reform efforts (such as the LEAP program in Ohio) indicates that this can be an effective strategy. TANF agencies are now looking to school districts to help them meet this requirement and there are clear benefits to coordinated planning and implementation between schools and public assistance agencies. However, these two institutions have not traditionally worked together and doing so raises a number of challenges.

This section highlights a number of the specific challenges inherent in attempts to link the educational and public assistance programs. Several examples of community efforts are described to illustrate ways in which these challenges can be overcome at the local level. Recommendations are then outlined for policy action that would help communities make more effective use of the TANF requirements. These policies would ensure that the goal of increasing economic self-sufficiency for teen parents is achieved and negative consequences for them and their children are avoided.

## THE CHALLENGES OF LINKING SCHOOLS WITH TANF

The TANF requirement that teen parents receiving benefits participate in an educational program affects both those currently in school — who must be supported to continue to attend and make progress toward graduation — and parenting school dropouts — who are attempting to return to school to obtain or maintain benefits. Many teen parents in both groups of current TANF recipients face substantial obstacles to their successfully completing school. In addition, parenting teens not currently eligible for or receiving benefits now are at significant risk of becoming TANF recipients at some point in the future, especially those who have had poor attendance and low academic performance.[17] This situation is the backdrop to a number of organizational and institutional challenges to using schools as a vehicle for welfare reform.

***[16] The 1996 federal law establishing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) generally prohibits an unmarried, minor custodial parent from receiving federally-funded benefits, unless she is living with a parent, legal guardian, or adult relative. There are a number of exemptions permitted under the law, and in those instances states are required to provide or assist in locating an alternative "adult-supervised supportive living arrangement" unless it determines that the current living arrangement is appropriate. See M. Greenberg and S. Savner,* A Detailed Summary of Key Provisions of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Block Grant, *Washington, DC: CLASP, 1996.***

***[17] The next section discusses the need to provide support services to parenting students who are not currently TANF recipients and strategies to create the resources to do so.***

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## VI. Linking Schools with TANF Services and Resources (continued)

TANF sets up high expectations for teen parent beneficiaries who are enrolled in school. School attendance is expected to move parenting teens toward economic self-sufficiency by providing them with the knowledge and skills needed to take their place in the work force. Yet TANF requirements do not fully take into account the educational deficits of many teen parents or the supports that are needed for them to successfully attain a solid education, while at the same time school systems often do not have the capacity to meet the needs of students who require not only remedial educational services, but also an array of other supports to stay in and succeed in school.

In practice, it appears that in implementing this TANF requirement most local and state public assistance agencies have assumed that requiring that teen parent beneficiaries enroll in school will have the desired results. Given what we know about the need to provide alternative educational options and an array of support services for many such students (described in earlier sections), it seems that a coordinated effort between school and TANF policies and practices will be desirable.

However, in most communities there has been little connection between the educational system and the public agencies responsible for administering economic assistance. The traditional separation of the work of these two systems is reinforced by a number of factors, including:

- Differences in terminology and staff training;
- Unfamiliarity with each other's rules, policies, reporting requirements, governing regulations, and basic operating information; and
- Legal, technical and organizational difficulties in accessing or sharing information from each other.

Further, TANF had to be put in place relatively quickly, calling for considerable changes within the public assistance program. While regulations and procedures were still being developed, it was difficult for TANF agencies to bring schools into a conversation about how welfare reform would impact schools and how schools might become more of a partner in helping teen parents move toward self-sufficiency. Schools, not engaged in local planning for and unsure of the implications of TANF implementation, generally did not take active steps or have the resources to build their capacity to meet the educational and support needs of parenting students.[18] In most communities, the lack of a forum for communication and joint planning hampered work to prepare to make best use of the TANF educational requirement to improve educational outcomes for teen parents.

### SOLUTIONS FROM THE FIELD

In some states, strategies have been developed to encourage school-TANF linkages.

- The ELECT program in Pennsylvania uses TANF funds to help local districts offer services to teen parents enrolled in school. This program has established ongoing relationships between school districts and local TANF agencies. In Pittsburgh, for example, there was joint training between school-based teen parent advocates and Department of Public Welfare staff about available subsidized child care for parenting students. This relationship has also offered advocates opportunities to connect individual teens with community-based support services. In addition, support for the advocates had made it possible for them to engage in pregnancy prevention education for students in the early grades as a welfare prevention measure.
- In the District of Columbia, teen parents under 20 without a high school diploma are automatically referred to the schools and the district receives funds from the TANF block grant to provide educational and related services to these students.
- Ohio's welfare reform effort, LEAP, implemented a set of strategies to improve school attendance and completion for teen parents receiving public assistance. These included providing case management services by social service agency staff and supporting child care on site at schools.

***[18] This is not surprising, given that there was little coordination on welfare reform policies at the federal level between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services.***

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## VI. Linking Schools with TANF Services and Resources (continued)

There have also been local efforts at school-TANF collaboration.

- In Minneapolis, virtually all teen parents enrolled in school are eligible for child care subsidy for either on-site or in special family day care homes. The school district has been responsible for providing the county economic assistance unit with regular reports on school attendance by eligible teen parents. During the early implementation of federal welfare reform, the county and the school district jointly reviewed attendance policies and reporting requirements and have worked, together with community-based home visiting programs for young families, to develop a coordinated approach to attendance tracking and early intervention with teen parents whose attendance is poor.
- In Portland, the welfare agency has provided funding for case management services for TANF-eligible parenting students in the city's schools. These services are provided through contract with a community-based program that works closely with the teen parent liaisons in the schools. Schools, the service provider, and the county economic assistance agency have collaborated to develop a case management system that stretches TANF funds and existing community resources to support all teen parents in school.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

State and local planning and implementation of TANF offers many opportunities to strengthen school-based programs for teen parents, but certain policies must be promoted to ensure that these opportunities are realized.

Federal and state TANF agencies should require that **plans for the implementation of TANF address the special needs and circumstances of parenting teen recipients.** Particularly in light of the requirements for school attendance, developing and monitoring these plans should actively involve local school districts and other providers of educational services. These plans should address issues related to the educational deficits of many teen parent TANF recipients. In particular, given these deficits, it may be likely that some will be unable to complete regular high school education requirements prior to age 18 when they are required to begin meeting work requirements. Therefore, such a plan may need to consider support for a broader range of educational alternatives for parenting teens in the community.

Local TANF agencies and school districts should develop **joint procedures for identifying parenting teen TANF recipients and referring them to appropriate educational programs**. These procedures should ensure that the educational and other needs of teen parents and their children are assessed and that placements are available to provide them with both appropriate educational programs and with the necessary support services. In addition, these procedures should provide for tracking and responding to attendance problems in a timely way and for monitoring progress toward successful school completion.

TANF funds should be used to **support the development of school capacity to effectively educate** teen parents. These funds could be used to develop appropriate options (including curriculum and staff development) for parenting students with significant educational deficits as well as support case management services for these students and their children. States should target some of their surplus TANF funds to extend these support services to parenting students who are not currently TANF recipients, but who may become welfare eligible if they do not complete their education. TANF funds should also be used to **support the development of school-based teen parent programs** that provide supports to parenting students and link both teen parents and their children with community services.

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# VII. PROVIDING SERVICES TO ALL TEEN PARENTS, BOTH NON-TANF AND TANF

\Many teen parents are not eligible for or receiving TANF today, but are likely to be so in the future if they do not receive supportive services that help them to stay in school. A broad welfare prevention strategy would include mechanisms to ensure that all teen parents are provided these supports while in school, regardless of their welfare status.

## THE CHALLENGES OF PROVIDING SERVICES TO ALL TEEN PARENTS, REGARDLESS OF TANF STATUS

There are two major challenges to providing support services to non-TANF as well as TANF teen parents and their children. First and foremost, there is no stable public source of funding universally available to pay for child care, case management and other support services for all teen parents regardless of TANF status. Second, while there are often a variety of funding sources available that could pay for some support services for some non-TANF teen parents, there is no single entity within a community with responsibility and authority to pull those resources together.

## SOLUTIONS FROM THE FIELD

There are a number of strategies local communities and states have taken to create some flexible resources so that a broader group of teen parents, beyond those eligible for public welfare assistance, can receive support services.

In several states, flexible state resources are provided to localities (in particular, school districts) through formulas based on the numbers of teen parents served through schools. Generally, the resources come to the district in the form of supplemental average daily attendance dollars. These enhanced average daily attendance (ADA) formulas generate additional revenues for local school districts that are flexible in how they can be used. These funds can be used for education, child care, case management, summer programming and so on, with no income restrictions on the students to which these services can be provided.

- In Florida, the program is called the Teenage Parent Program (TAP) and is administered through the state Department of Education. Districts receive state education monies for each teen parent in an approved TAP program (at a rate of 1.6 FTE or full-time equivalent). The children of teen parents are also enrolled as students, assigned an ID number and included in the district's full time equivalent count. These funds can pay for most programmatic elements for school-based programs for teen parents and their children, including child care whether on site or not.[19] Some but not all of the dollars going to local districts under this program are required to be spent on teen parents.
- Oregon's program is quite similar with respect to teen parents in that districts receive weighted reimbursements for the number of adolescent parents they serve. The monies go to the districts, but are not required to be spent on teen parents. There are few restrictions on how these monies can be spent.
- The State of California has had a state-funded program providing reimbursements to counties for services specifically for pregnant and parenting minors. The California legislature has just passed a new bill, patterned after the Florida law, called CALSAFE. CALSAFE replaces three programs for pregnant and parenting teens and their children currently funded at $43 million, while also expanding services.

[19] ***More information on Florida's funding approach is provided in*** **School-Based Programs for Adolescent Parents and Their Young Children: Overcoming Barriers and Challenges in Implementing Comprehensive School-Based Services, *CAPD, Bala Cynwyd, PA, 1994, page 70.***

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## VII. Providing Services to all Teen Parents, Both Non-TANF and TANF (continued)

The flexibility and administrative ease of using state educational formulas make it possible for the funds to pay for a broad range of services for all parenting students regardless of income or welfare status. However, use of such formulas also allows districts to use these funds to pay for any services to any group of students. Thus, once in the district's coffers, the additional state funds generated by enrolling teen parents and their children may not necessarily be allocated to services for these students. Advocates for teen parent services who want their state to take this approach to funding should build language into any authorizing legislation requiring that additional resources which come to the district be spent for the benefit of teen parents and their children.

There are other strategies for serving non-TANF as well as TANF teen parents.

- Pennsylvania's state-funded program provides resources to school districts for support services for teen parents who meet income eligibility requirements. However, in Pittsburgh subsidized child care is available to all teen parents who are enrolled in school, regardless of income, because other public funding streams (specifically, CCDBG) have placed highest priority on serving teen parents among its target groups.
- In Hennepin County, Minnesota (which includes Minneapolis) the county social services agency makes both case management services and child care subsidies available to all teen parents, regardless of TANF status. The funds for these services are a combination of state and county general fund dollars.

These various strategies are encouraging in that they suggest both state and local strategies for creating new funding streams and more effectively accessing existing funding streams to support teen parent services. However, states have an opportunity now, with their TANF surplus dollars, to begin to build a broad welfare prevention strategy by funding support services for non-TANF teen parents so that they can stay in and complete school, avoiding the need to rely on public economic assistance.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the importance of support services to help teen parents stay in and complete school and to ensure that their children get off to a good start, it makes sense to craft national, state and local policies to provide these services to all parenting adolescents and to do so as much as possible through school-based programs.

State TANF policies and regulations should allow and in fact **encourage support to non-TANF as well as TANF teen parents as a welfare prevention strategy.** This welfare prevention strategy should be supported with TANF surplus dollars among other resources. States could offer demonstration dollars to selected communities to develop replicable models for implementing such strategies.

In allocating other public funds for support services such as child care subsidies, case management and parenting education, community agencies or boards should place **high priority on teen parents and the children of teen parents.** These funds can then be used to pay for services available to TANF-eligible parenting teens.

States should enact and fund legislation to **provide additional resources to school districts based on the number of teen parents and children of teen parents served through schools.** These resources should be provided for the children of teen parents who are registered in such programs regardless of the location of child care (on-site or not). When such resources flow to the schools, they should be flexible enough to pay for a wide range of services and supports, but should be earmarked for expenditures on behalf of the teen parents and their children.

State funding should also support the provision of **technical assistance to local districts on how to build effective school-based programs,** including development of a range of educational options. They should not provide differential fiscal incentives for the schools to create stand-alone schools rather than embedding services in the comprehensive high schools.

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## VIII. CREATING A COORDINATED PLAN AND COMREHENSIVE SYSTEM FOR TEEN PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

When CAPD began our work on school-based programs for adolescent parents and their children six years ago, we were struck by the observations of Gail Zellman about such programs.[20] She concluded that, while individual school-based programs existed that met some of the needs of pregnant and parenting teens, none offered a comprehensive program. She also noted that schools cannot take on the responsibility for leadership, policy development and service delivery for teen parents alone; other community agencies and organizations can and should be involved.

Zellman's conclusions, written in 1982, seemed to us equally applicable in 1994 when we published our nationwide review of school-based programs. Five years later they still seem apropos.

As a field we know much about how to craft programmatic approaches to meeting the needs of teen parents and their children through school-based programs. There are many examples at the school, district or community and state level of practices and policies that can contribute to the ability of school-based programs to help parenting adolescents and their children move toward long-term success in life. We also have seen how, with some additional funding and technical assistance, it is possible to assist school-based programs to expand the scale, scope and quality of their efforts, even in the face of serious challenges.

At the same time, we have seen school-based programs continue to struggle with the expectations that schools will meet the needs of parenting students on their own, even as resources for schools are stretched thinner and thinner. School-based programs also struggle to meet the broader needs of young families, including adolescent fathers and the children of teen parents. Almost all the other services and supports needed by these young families, other than education of school-aged children, are outside of the schools' domain. And often the potential to bring the other critical services to teen parents and their children through school-based programs goes unrealized, as does the potential for creating a comprehensive system that offers both school- and community-based supports for these young families and all their members.

Underlying the challenges described in this paper is the fact that most communities have no natural arena for identifying and convening the array of public and private programs, providers and agencies, including the schools, that have a role or potential role in helping adolescents and their children get over the hurdles that come with teenage childbearing. Typically, there is no one entity within a community with responsibility for ensuring that teen parents and their children get off to a good start as individuals and as a family unit, and there is generally no place where all the systems can come together to develop a coordinated and comprehensive strategy. Instead, there are many agencies and organizations, including schools, with a piece of that responsibility.

We believe that both adolescent parents and their children would benefit if communities put in place a coordinated strategy that brings together all a community's resources currently or potentially available for these vulnerable young families in a way that maximizes their impact. Such a strategy would address the needs and opportunities for parenting teens, both mothers and fathers, and their children, regardless of income eligibility or beneficiary status.

Creating a framework for collaboration among public agencies, private providers and schools toward a common agenda on behalf of teen parents and their children will be difficult. Yet we feel that is the necessary next step, if we want to go beyond the efforts of

[20] ***Zellman, G. L., "Public School Programs for Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenthood: An Assessment." Family Planning Perspectives, Vol. 14, pages 15-82 (1982).***

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## VIII. Creating a Coordinated plan and Comprehensive System for Teen Parents and Tehir Children (continued)

individual school- and community-based programs to a strategy that builds strong young families for the future. It would create the necessary collective leadership within and across key agencies and institutions to tackle the barriers to coordination and could put in place the following important elements of a community strategy:

- Recognition of young families as being comprised of mothers, fathers and their children as a unit, even if not living together, and of the full range of needs of all individual family members and of the family unit;
- Development of a community-wide vision and action plan to support young families;
- Coordination of services and resources across and within key agencies, including education, economic assistance, child welfare, health and housing, as well as community-based provider organizations;
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities across agencies and provider organizations;
- Investments in building staff capacity in key agencies and organizations to implement best practices in their work with young parents and their children; and
- Promotion of public will on behalf of young families, countering common attitudes about teen mothers and non-custodial fathers that limit willingness to use public funds to offer support and provide services.

What will it take to put together a coherent comprehensive strategy for teen parents and their children? Experience in this initiative and in other related efforts suggests that a number of factors need to come together.

- Broader public awareness and education on the needs of young families started by teen parents and on the opportunities to make a difference for their young children as well as for the adolescents themselves is needed to overcome attitudinal barriers. Voters, school board members, teachers and school personnel, agency and provider staff, parents and advocates all need to believe that providing supports through school-based programs is feasible, effective and sound public policy. Concerns based on moral values and negative opinions about parenting teens need to be addressed, so that these young families can become a high priority on the community's agenda.
- There are many potential leaders within most communities who could champion a comprehensive strategy for teen parents and their children. However, they generally operate within agencies or organizations with wider responsibilities or that only address some of the issues faced by these young families. Incentives, resources and other supports would be helpful in identifying and bringing together natural leaders who could be the catalyst for community coalitions.
- Similarly, investments in the work of building a network of agencies and providers are needed. These networks are essential for building the relationships and providing the forum for working through the many tough organizational, disciplinary and other issues that would arise if increased coordination of services and policies is desired.
- Work at the state and federal levels is also important, both to create the necessary resources for community-level efforts and also to deal with policy issues beyond community borders. Without clear direction and support (in many forms — funding, policy guidelines, performance standards and outcome goals, technical assistance, information, etc.), local efforts frequently struggle to build momentum and are hard to sustain over time.

With these factors in place, our communities would have a much greater chance of creating the system of services and supports linked with schools and coordinated to reach all teen parents and their children with what they need to become strong and productive families. It is an investment well worth making.



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**Summary of Policy Implications (continued)**

- TANF funds should be used to support the development of school capacity to effectively educate teen parents and to link teen parents and their children with community services.

**Providing services to all teen parents, both non-TANF and TANF**

- State TANF policies and regulations should allow and in fact encourage support to non-TANF as well as TANF teen parents as a welfare prevention strategy.
- In allocating other public funds for support services such as child care subsidies, case management and parenting education, community agencies or boards should place high priority on teen parents and the children of teen parents.
- States should enact and fund legislation to provide additional resources to school districts based on the number of teen parents and children of teen parents served through schools.
- State funding should also support the provision of technical assistance to local districts on how to build effective school-based programs, including development of a range of educational options.

## TAKING THE NEXT STEP: A BROAD COMMUNITY-WIDE STRATEGY FOR YOUNG FAMILIES

The experience of the Initiative also supports the need for a broader, community-wide strategy — one that creates a coordinated plan and builds a comprehensive system for teen parents and their children. School-based programs will be a necessary and major component of such a broad strategy, but their efforts must be complemented by community-based programs and services. These will be required not only to reach older teen mothers whose educational and other needs cannot be effectively met in school-based programs, but particularly to ensure that teen fathers and the children of teen parents are adequately served.

Such a community-wide strategy must come from not a single institution or agency, but from a coalition of public and private organizations that touch the lives of young families. In most communities now, there is no one entity within a community with responsibility for ensuring that teen parents and their children get off to a good start as individuals and as a family unit, and there is generally no place where all the systems can come together to develop a coordinated and comprehensive strategy. Instead, there are many agencies and organizations, including schools, with a piece of that responsibility.

Creating a framework for collaboration among public agencies, private providers and schools toward a common agenda on behalf of teen parents and their children will be difficult. Yet we feel that is the necessary next step, if we want to go beyond the efforts of individual school- and community-based programs to a strategy that builds strong young families for the future. Therefore, we end this policy document with a brief discussion of the likely products of such a strategy, and of what it will take to make such a strategy a reality.



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# II. INTRODUCTION

This policy paper addresses how to strengthen school-based efforts for adolescent parents and their children so that they can be more effective in meeting the needs and improving outcomes of these young families. Based on the experience and lessons of a six-year initiative funded by several national foundations and administered by the Center for Assessment and Policy Development (CAPD), this document lays out specific challenges faced by school-based programs and describes solutions to these challenges developed in the field. But the major focus is on identifying policy changes — at the community, state and federal levels and those appropriate to private funders — that would allow these solutions to be more broadly implemented.

## THE POTENTIAL OF SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS FOR ADOLESCENT PARENTS AND THEIR YOUNG CHILDREN

Adolescent parents and their children are two particularly vulnerable groups in our society whose long-term life chances are interconnected. Both are at critical points in their lives, where their life courses can be shaped toward healthy development, stability, and productivity, or toward life-long poverty and dependency. And we know that, without support, many of these young families will struggle with poverty and its effects:

- While teen parents represent only a small portion of the welfare case load at any given point in time, the majority of wellfare recipients started their child bearing as teenagers.
- Forty-seven percent of all poor children under the age of six had an adolescent parent at birth.[2]
- Children born into and living in poverty are more likely than other children to have poor birth outcomes, to be sicker during childhood, to experience more and greater developmental delays, to be less well prepared for school, and to be less successful in school.

Efforts to improve outcomes for these young families must take advantage of every opportunity to connect them with the services and supports that will help them move toward positive growth — toward success in the worlds of school, work and parenting for the teens and toward healthy development and school readiness for their young children. We know that schools can be an effective locus for providing teens and their children with services and supports essential to their long-term success.

- Evidence from a host of programs suggests that providing comprehensive services to teen parents once they have left school is not likely to lead to improvements in outcomes.[3]
- Intervening at and through schools by providing case management and on-site child care produces more promising outcomes in terms of school performance for teen parents.[4]
- On-site or specialized off-site child care and school-based health services also provide opportunities for ensuring that the young children of teen parents have access to basic preventive and developmental services.

[2] **Five Million Children: A Statistical Profile of Our Poorest Young Citizens.** ***National Center for Children in Poverty, New York, NY, 1990.***

[3] ***For example, while the New Chance demonstration showed significant effects on GED receipt, there were no impacts on the likelihood of moving from welfare into the job market or on the timing or frequency of repeat pregnancies (CITE).***

[4] ***See, for example*** **, LEAP: Final Report on Ohio's Welfare Initiative to Improve School Attendance among Teenage Parents,** ***Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, New York, NY, 1997.***

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CENTER FOR ASSESSMENT AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

CAPD

# IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

*Lessons Learned*

WENDY C. WOLF
SALLY A. LEIDERMAN

## LESSONS LEARNED ACROSS RECENT PROJECTS

**There is some new evidence, and new thinking about next steps to be tried, about what it might take for children, families and communities to thrive.**

- New psycho neurological research supports the necessity to pay attention to the very earliest years of a child's life (pre-conception, prenatally and in the first three years).
- There is a renewed focus on individual responsibility for children's well-being across very different political ideologies.
- There continues to be no institutional or system home charged with overseeing a collective responsibility for the well-being of young children.
- Efforts to improve outcomes at the system level tend to pull attention away from practice at the front-line, or specific interactions between children and those responsible for their well-being (child care providers, teachers, recreation sponsors).
- Evidence of the effectiveness of some promising interventions — family support, family preservation and home visiting — is mixed.
- Early child well-being is made up of multiple dimensions with respect to the child (cognitive, social, physical, emotional) and with respect to factors that influence well-being (family, neighborhood, community). School readiness is an emerging concept that focuses on these multiple dimensions. The concept includes, for example, making schools and communities ready for children, not just the reverse.
- There have always been trade-offs between developing universal, non-stigmatizing efforts to improve outcomes for children and meeting the needs of specialized populations. Given scarce resources, one of the ways out of this bind is to broaden our thinking about the full range of individual and collective actions that might improve outcomes for children, and to create both universal and targeted activities within each sphere. For example, there are opportunities to embed child development activities more fully within libraries, recreational and spiritual settings, etc.

**Experience indicates better ways to design and share models:**

- A broad vision is critical for creating a broad-based constituency to improve outcomes, but it must be tempered by realistic short-term and interim goals and benchmarks. There is a tension between working from a vision that is worth the effort and making people feel the work is doable.
- Using an outcomes orientation, and working from jointly developed theories of change (see examples) are useful strategies to help people manage complex change processes and to keep work focused.
- Models that are sufficient to achieve improved outcomes for children, families and communities are necessarily complex, comprehensive and long-term. When they are based on research, they will also have some elements that are fixed (to avoid reinventing the wheel). But because there is much that we do not know about how to improve outcomes, particularly for all children or on a broad scale given current systems and funding constraints, models must also incorporate flexibility to promote innovation.

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Improving Outcomes for Young Children, Families and Communities (continued)

- Not only are these models difficult to build and implement, they are quite difficult to communicate.
- It is useful to work on ways to break down complex models in component parts so that they can be communicated more easily and so that early tangible successes can be celebrated.
- Clarity about what's fixed and what's flexible is essential.

**There are specific capacities that need to be developed to improve the likelihood that efforts to improve outcomes will begin well and succeed over time:**

- Work on governance structures tends to overwhelm work on improving outcomes, and there is disagreement in the field about whether new structures are worth their cost in energy, resources and political capital. It is clear that communities consider governance issues more effectively after they have built trust, established the strengths and weaknesses of current structures **for achieving the specific improvements in outcomes being sought** and developed their strategies to improve child and family well-being. Capacity to deal with this issue is developed over time.
- Successful efforts to improve outcomes for young children and their families have political and/or community champions. These champions have been the Mayor, Governor or key legislator and/or respected business leaders.
- Leadership development and capacity building at all levels is needed to ensure effective participation of a broad range of individuals.
- There is a trade-off between inclusiveness and efficiency in collaborative efforts (long noted in the literature). There are specific steps that communities can take to form and maintain inclusive efforts; absent these specific steps, efforts will tend to exclude those with different ideologies and theories of change. In addition, issues related to class, race and gender may interfere with the work unless surfaced and addressed.

**Some activities previously considered as tangential or separate — engaging the public in support of the behaviors that need to be changed to improve outcomes; addressing institutional racism; fostering and providing access to normal, positive child development activities and opportunities in communities — need to be fully embedded within any efforts to improve outcomes for young children.**

- Efforts to engage the public are an essential programmatic strategy to improve outcomes, but they need to be very carefully targeted and crafted.
- We have tended to underplay the role of racism, and particularly, institutional racism, in the development of strategies to address children and family outcomes.
- We tend to focus our efforts on improving poor outcomes, rather than on a higher standard of having all children thrive; thus making the individual child and family the unit of intervention, not the community. A focus on poor outcomes also leads to remedial and targeted strategies rather than strategies aimed at creating a community which supports high levels of well-being and achievement of children and families. A different strategy showing promise is to think more about normal child development and to build communities with the services, activities and supports most likely to foster those positive goals.
- The non-profit sector provides myriad opportunities to support normal child development that are often overlooked, or not thought about in a systemic way.

**The process by which communities, foundations and others (intermediaries, technical assistance providers, evaluators) can most effectively work together is important. New forms of partnership need to be implemented.**

- Such partnerships entail more equitable relationships between funders, communities, intermediaries and states, as well as different relationships between families and systems.



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- This work requires an understanding and appreciation that inclusiveness and trust take time to create and maintain, that work will not proceed in a linear or smooth fashion, that improvement against intermediate markers is progress, and that there are some things each community has to learn for itself. Timing and funding decisions should reflect this reality.
- At the same time, there is considerable resistance to altering existing power relationships necessary to change the status quo. Interim markers of progress can be used to promote accountability and identify and overcome resistance.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR NEXT GENERATION COMMUNITY/FOUNDATION PARTNERSHIPS

**Some of the lessons above have implications for how communities might do their work:**

- Consider establishing positive goals (children thriving, school readiness, normal child development) rather than goals tied solely to reduction of negative outcomes. These goals reduce stigma, set the stage for universal efforts and draw in a broad range of community stakeholders beyond traditional service providers and systems (for example, parents; neighborhoods; recreational, spiritual and educational activities and services; schools, etc.).
- Consider establishing the community (rather than individual children and families) as the target of intervention. This avoids blaming the victim, it helps to establish a collective responsibility for children (and helps make their roles clear) and it sets the stage for taking smaller efforts to scale.
- Create and continue to refine a theory of change about the strategies, short-term and interim outcomes that are required to achieve the long-term outcomes of interest. Use this as a tool to refine strategies and develop benchmarks or markers of progress.
- Do a careful analysis of the behaviors that need to be changed to achieve short-term and interim outcomes, identify the groups who can make those changes, and the communication and other strategies that influence their behavior. Target change efforts (including public will efforts) based on the results of this analysis.
- Take advantage of available technical assistance about strategies to achieve outcomes.
- Also take advantage of available technical assistance about group process, collaboration, conflict resolution and other process skills.
- Take specific (and known) steps to build inclusive collaborations.
- Build on research and best practice, taking care to replicate the features of efforts that contribute to positive outcomes. (Don't allow efforts to become diluted and expect them to work.)
- Negotiate benchmarks, and develop ways of measuring results and reporting progress, that help the community hold itself accountable for making a difference in the lives of children.

**Many of the above lessons have implications for funders. In addition to supporting the communities' work in the areas noted above, foundations can:**

- Be the glue that holds initiatives together across changes in leadership, including changes in political administrations. Given that efforts to improve outcomes for young children and families require long-term, sustained attention, foundations need to stay with them over the long haul, including through predictable periods of reduced or stalled activity.
- Practice new forms of partnership with communities (go beyond rhetoric, especially in the tough decisions). Implement joint identification of problems and joint problem-solving in decisions about initiative goals and processes. Negotiate benchmarks and be clear how they are tied to funding decisions.
- Do the necessary internal work to know the rules under which an initiative will operate, and communicate those rules clearly to communities.



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**Improving Outcomes for Young Children, Families and Communities (continued)**

- Take special care not to communicate mixed messages, in the guise of appearing to be flexible.
- Build assessment in from the beginning. Think about "authentic assessment" (analogous to authentic assessment or portfolio assessment of children in school).

Fund an effort that is worth doing, even if it does not lend itself to easy evaluation, for example, in the case of community saturation models.

- Be sure to make race and racism an explicit part of the diagnosis of poor outcomes or failure to achieve more positive outcomes, and consider racism (including institutional racism) in developing strategies.
- Provide resources and expertise that allow communities to implement effective public will strategies based on results of analysis of behaviors to change.

**CAPD has incorporated many of these lessons into its work. Ways that CAPD and other planning, intermediary, evaluation organizations might change our work include:**

- Temper prescriptiveness. Where prescriptiveness is justified, based on research and analysis, make sure we are absolutely clear that guidelines are a framework to be modified locally.
- Implement a new form of partnership not just in planning and design work, but in evaluation. Focus evaluation on strengthening the success of an initiative, through joint work on articulating theories of change, establishing benchmarks, providing practical and timely feedback, and establishing tracking and assessment systems that support management, public will activities as well as evaluation.
- Spend more time up front with all of the parties clarifying the roles of the partners (communities, foundations, CAPD) and the exact nature of the partnership.
- Spend more time up front with foundations helping them articulate expected outcomes for an initiative, setting realistic expectations and establishing what's fixed and what's flexible.
- Spend more time with communities and foundations on how to implement a broad vision while still paying sufficient attention to the quality of interactions between children and those who influence their development.
- Make more use of joint development of theories of change to clarify: the relationship between strategies and intended results; assess sufficiency of proposed strategies; identify appropriate interim markers of progress; and support communication.
- Take a community's lead more in TA, paying more attention to providing practical, specific and timely advice (consistent with lessons above).
- Share with communities lessons from a variety of experiences that can inform their work (draw not only from early childhood efforts, but relevant work related to leadership development, anti-racism and public will work and from work to establish assessment and tracking systems to monitor community and individual well-being).
- Continue to refine how we do our work, including how we approach planning, implementation and evaluation from a partnership perspective.



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